ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS
GOING HOME
6

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237
DEC

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CEREBUS
NO. 237 DECEMBER 1998

JUDGE NOT

I did a radio interview back in 1992 in St. Louis as part of the "big" media push for *Cerebus* (hi, Carol, hi, Sonny). It was one of the better spots that we had been able to get, the morning-drive show, just me and the two hosts for a good twenty minutes or so.

Anyway, that was an election year: Bill Clinton, George Bush, and me crisscrossing the country. One of the hosts asked me if I was following the election and if I had a preference between the two candidates.

"If Bill Clinton would divorce Hillary, he would have my unconditional support." I liked Bill right away and disliked Hillary intensely on sight.

I think it is extremely foolish for any man who is aspiring to higher office, to leadership, to be married in this day and age where women are not only *allowed* to judge men but where that situation has become an *inevitability.* When the Travelgate mess, the F.B.I. files mess, and the missing Arkansas land transaction records mess all pointed to Hillary, I used to ask the rhetorical question, "Say, if Hillary is forced to resign as First Lady, does that mean Bill has to serve the rest of his term with Tipper Gore as his wife?" That sad and degraded feministic strain in the White House family quarters that I anticipated back in High Society with reference to Astoria: the thirst for power but no stomach for elections.

And now poor Bill has to live as just another husband, judged and found wanting by the unfairer sex. I wonder how much of Hillary's shit he takes every night ("You just couldn't keep your pants zipped. Dammit, Bill, didn't I tell you…"). Oh, well. As I said before — that's none of my business. That's between Bill and God.

So far as I know, there's nothing in the U.S. Constitution that says that you have to be married to become President. It's just another one of the many hidden gender rules, I guess. ("Thou shalt not become a world leader except that thou hast a ball and chain to rag on thine ass day and night.")

Sad.

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GOING HOME
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(Cerebus 232 to Cerebus 265)

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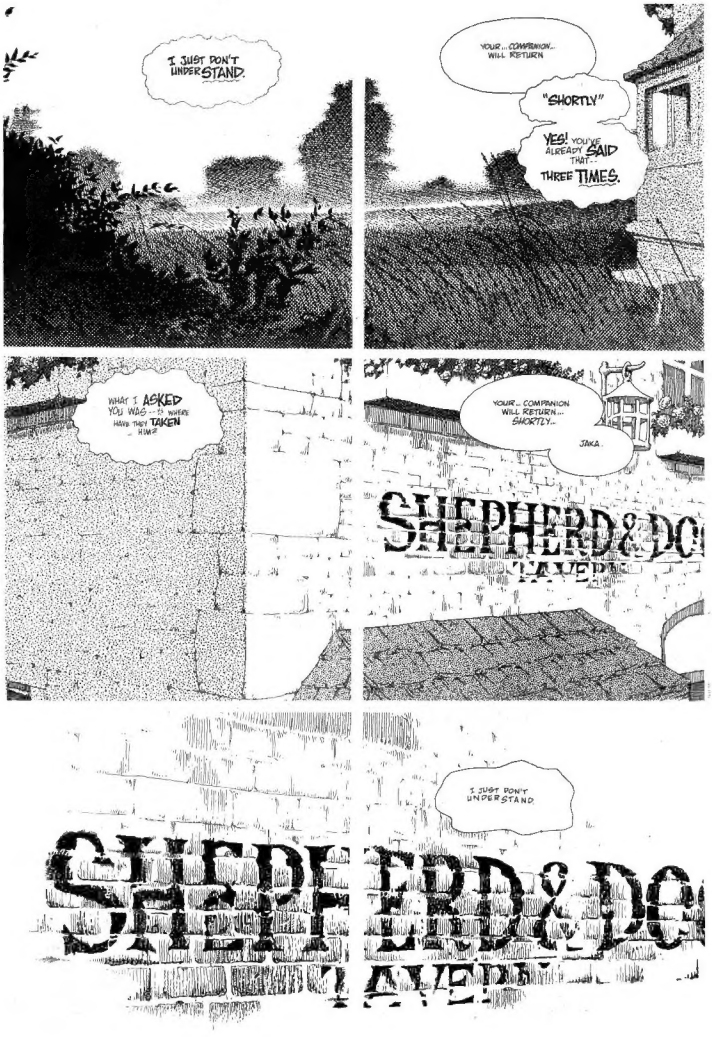

I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND.
YOUR... COMPANION... WILL RETURN
"SHORTLY"
YES! YOU'VE ALREADY SAID THAT... THREE TIMES.
WHAT I ASKED YOU WAS -- TO WHERE HAVE THEY TAKEN HIM?
YOUR... COMPANION WILL RETURN... SHORTLY...
JAKA
I JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND.

SO YOU'VE NEVER SEEN HER BEFORE
NAY.
SHE WAS SEEN LAST NIGHT
AFTER THE RECEPTION
SPEAKING... CLANDESTINELY... WITH THE PRINCESS
CEREBUS
GETS
THE MESSAGE
YOU DO.
AND WHAT MESSAGE WOULD THAT BE?

DEAD.
IS DEAD
BUZZ
BUZZ
YES.
DEAD
IS.
DEAD.
GET IN THE CARRIAGE
WE'LL BRING THE PRINCESS OUT WHEN THE REMAINS HAVE BEEN TAKEN AWAY.
BZZ
BZZZZ

THANK HEAVENS YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!
THEY--
THEY WOULDN'T TELL ME WHERE THEY HAD TAKEN YOU AND ALL
ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS THAT-- THAT-- SOMETHING AWFUL HAD HAPPENED
AND IT WAS ALL MY FAULT SOMEHOW
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK
JAKA.
THEY WOULDN'T TELL ME ANY THING
I KEPT ASKING
"WHERE HAVE YOU..."
JAKA!
YOU HAVE TO BE MORE CAREFUL ABOUT WHO YOU TALK TO!
UNDERSTAND?

OW!
Y-YOU'RE HURTING ME
?
YO
YES.
I UNDERSTAND.
I--I WILL BE MORE CAREFUL.
KLAK

(WHAT HAPPENED TO THE WOMAN I TALKED TO?)

(SHE DIDN'T ASK)

(SHE DOESN'T WANT TO KNOW)

"I'M SORRY WE'RE SO LATE GETTING TO THE CLOTHING HUT TODAY, HON!"

OH, THAT'S OKAY... Mwah!

(IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT THAT THERE WAS A WOMAN LYING IN THE LANEWAY IN FRONT OF THE SHEPHERD AND DOG SPLIT OPEN LIKE A

WELL, ALL RIGHT. IT PROBABLY WAS YOUR FAULT... but)

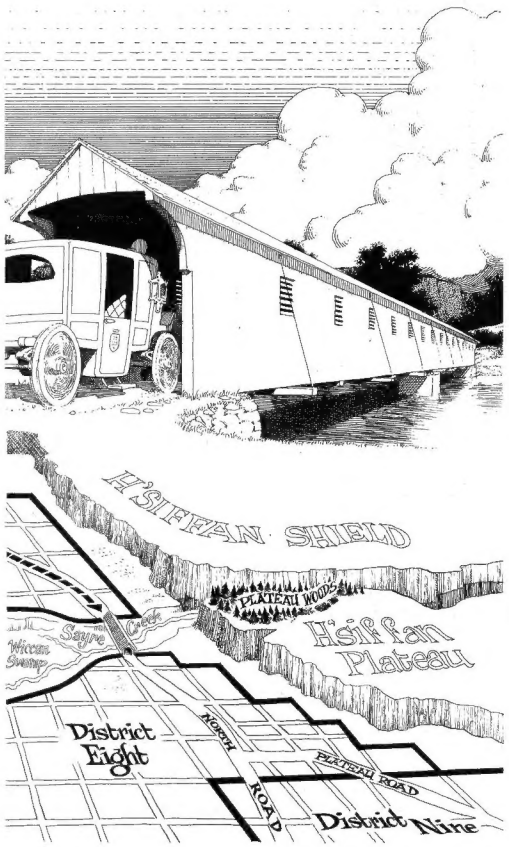
"OH, THAT'S OKAY... Mwah!"

JUST KEEP SMILING WITH THE UNHAPPY ONES. YOU HAVE TO BE HAPPY ENOUGH FOR TWO..."

"OH, THAT'S OKAY... Mwah!"

"JUST BE HAPPY EVERY DAMN MINUTE OF YOUR WAKING LIFE AND YOU'VE GOT HER FOR AS LONG AS YOU WANT HER"

"OH, THAT'S OKAY... Mwah!"



OKAY.

WHEN SHE ASKS ABOUT IT, CEREBUS WILL JUST SAY "SOMEONE GOT THEMSELVES DEAD."

"GASP! WHO?"

(SHE'LL SAY)

(OKAY... SOUNDS GOOD)

"YOU TALKED TO SOMEONE LAST NIGHT"

(NAY. CALMER)

"YOU TALKED TO SOMEONE LAST NIGHT-- CEREBUS DOESN'T KNOW WHO AND CEREBUS DOESN'T WANT TO KNOW WHO -- AND -- WELL SHE ENDED UP DEAD.

CEREBUS DOESN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT -- SO JUST BE MORE CAREFUL ABOUT WHO YOU TALK TO..."

(SHE'S GOING TO WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.)

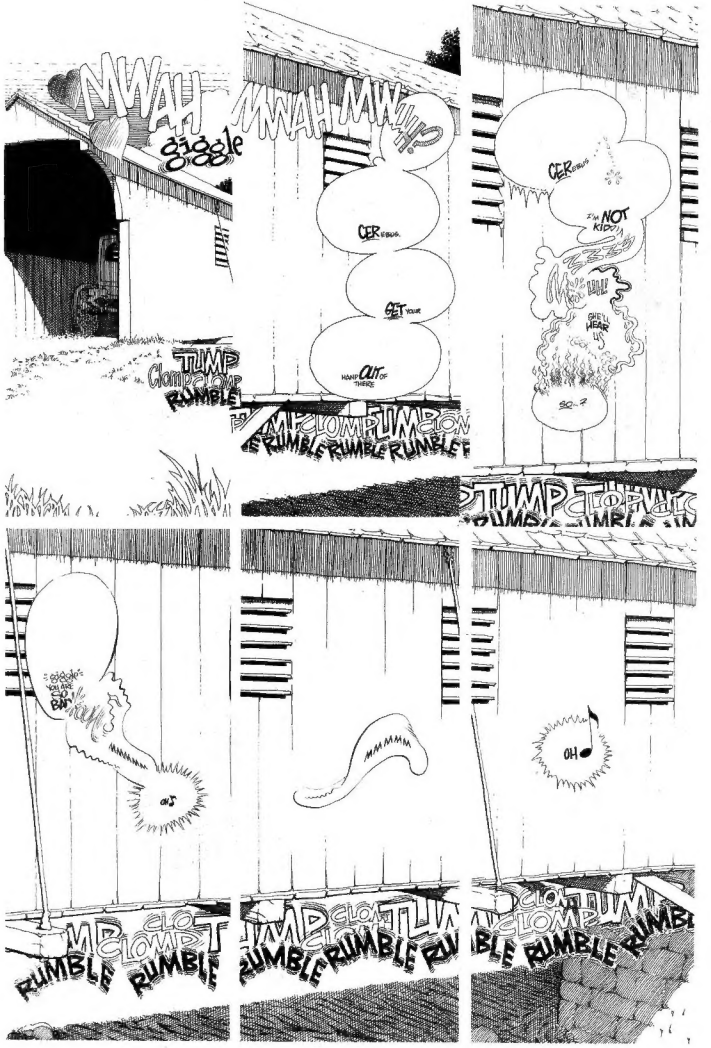
"CEREBUS DOESN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT AND CEREBUS DOESN'T THINK WE..."

AN' THEN GIVE 'ER THE LOOK

"...SHOULD TALK ABOUT IT."

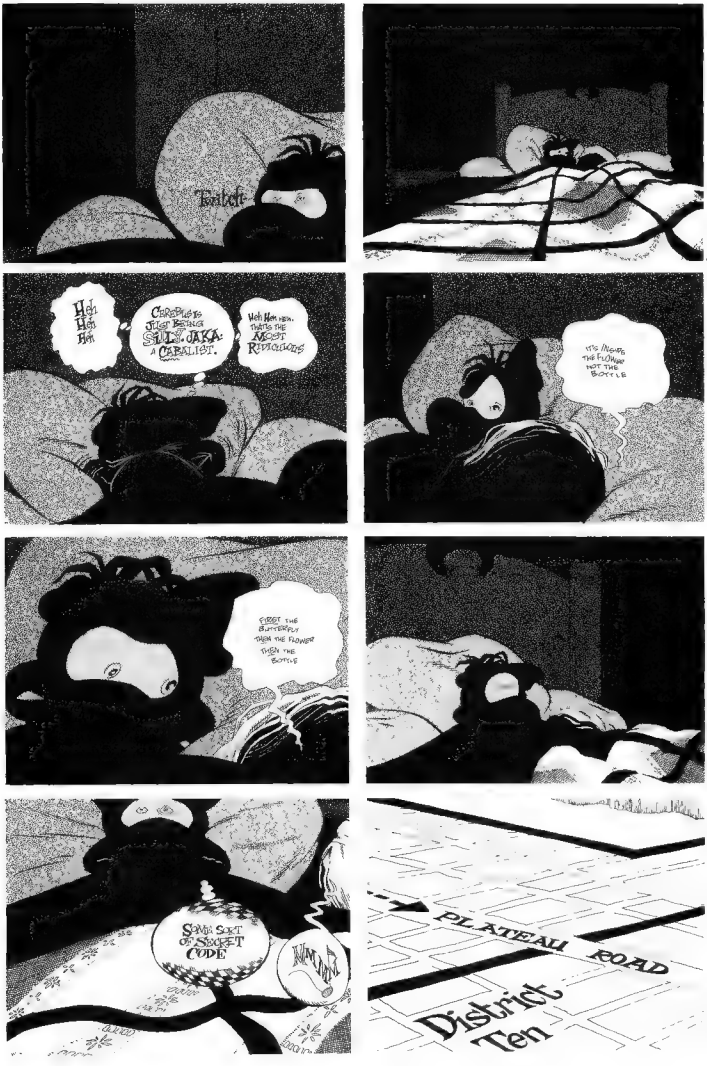
(AYE. THAT COULD...)

OH, LOOK! WE'RE CROSSING THE KISSING BRIDGE AGAIN!


MWAH
giggle
giggle
MWAH MWAH
CER-RRUK
GET YOUR
HAND CUT OF
THERE
I'm NOT
KIDDY
SQ...?
THUMP
CLOMP
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
giggle
YOU ARE
SO
BAD
MMMMM
OH
THUMP
CLOMP
RUMBLE

OHhhh MWAHAHAWAHAHAHAHA
OH!!
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
RUMBLE
OH!
UNH
THUMP
CLOMP
OH UNH
OH UNH
OH UNH
OH UNH

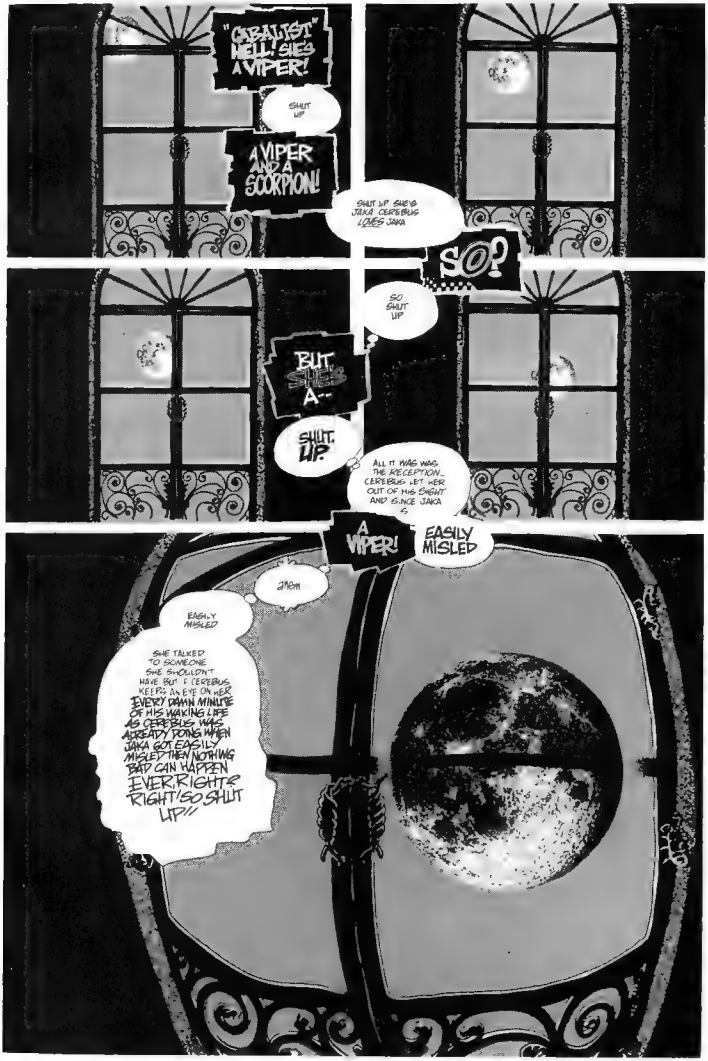
Clip Clop Clip Clop Clip Clop
I SHOULD'VE GUESSED SOMETHING WAS UP
WHEN YOU ASKED FOR ALL THOSE EXTRA SOFT HANDKERCHIEFS AT THE CLOTHING
SO TO SPEAK.
...
...LIKE ANOTHER ONE?
PLEASE !!
Clop Clip Clop
Mwah! Mwah!
CORALUS NEEDS TO GET SOME SLEEP
OKAY- HOW ABOUT THIS: HUK & DINA IS ONE OF THOSE
...YOU KNOW
Clop
NAY ONE OF THOSE--?
WHAT ASTORIA WAS A--?
A-- CABALIST YOU MEANT
A CABALIST
SNR
ASTORIA WAS ALWAYS SNEAKING AROUND PLANNING THINGS WITH WEIRDY PEOPLE WHO ENDED UP DEAD
THAT'S TRUE

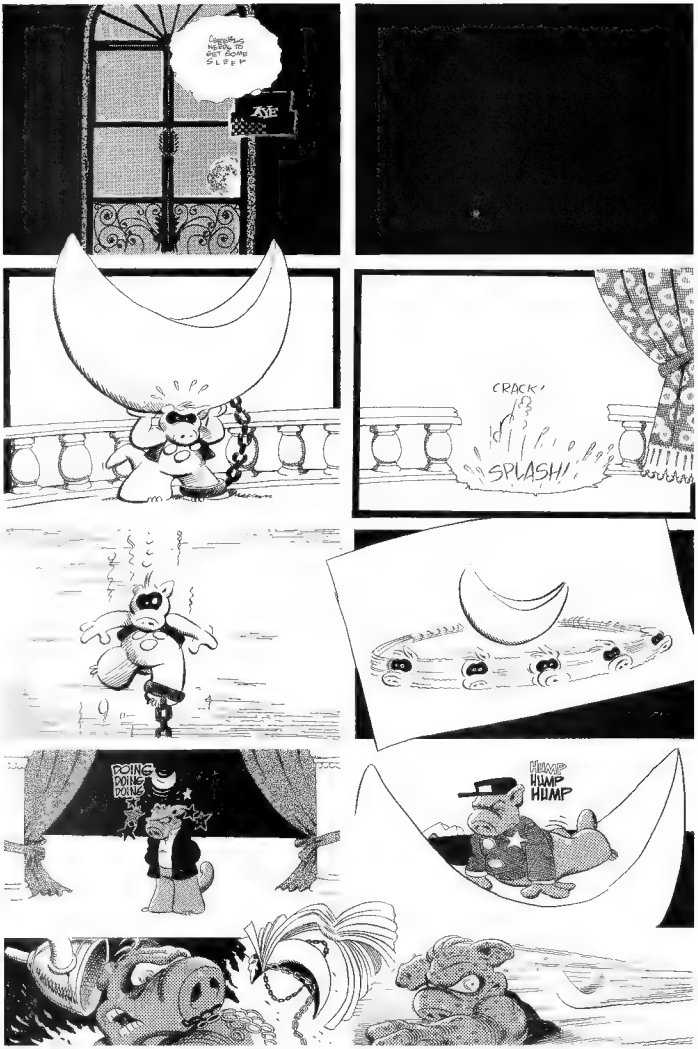

Tonight
Heh Heh Heh
Checking to see if he's still alive. Ha Ha! A corpse!
Woh Hoh Hoh... That's the most ridiculous!
It's neither the flower nor the bottle
First the butterfly then the flower then the bottle
Some sort of secret code
PLATEAU ROAD
District Ten

A KEVLIST YOU MEAN
HEAVENS
I'VE NEVER BELIEVED IN LABELS. I THINK IT'S A BODY THING THAT WOMEN HAVE MORE SELF CONFIDENCE THANKS TO THE KEVILISTS BUT...
REALLY... I'M JUST JAKA ALL... THAT'S
I BELIEVE IN NATURE. I BELIEVE IN TREES. AND BIRDS
BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS AND THE WAY THEY SMELL
THAT'S REALLY ALL I BELIEVE
AIE!..
AHEM
HEH.
OF COURSE
THE TREES AND BIRDS AND FLOWERS DIDN'T JUST "GET HERE" ON THEIR OWN.
TARIM...

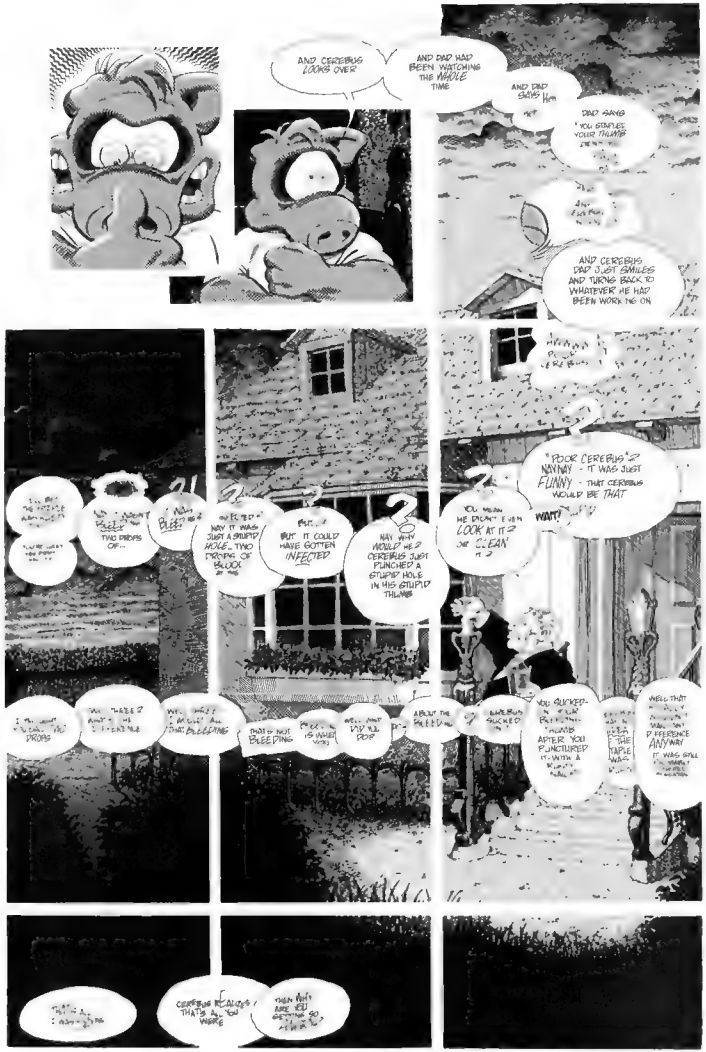
OH! AND LOVE
I BELIEVE IN US TOGETHER
I BELIEVE -- WITH ALL MY HEART -- IN HOW MUCH WE LOVE EACH OTHER
AHEM
OH, AYE! CERBERUS DOES TOO. MWAH!
BUT LIKE CERBERUS WAS SAYING
THE TREES AND BIRDS AND FLOWERS DIDN'T JUST "BE" HERE ON THE FARM. THEY OWN
THEY HAD TO BE CREATED, RIGHT?
THE SAME WAY THAT YOU CAME FROM THAT EGG
BUT THE EGG HAD COME FROM SOMEWHERE
I FIND OUT HOW YOU HATCH A BEAUTIFUL CHICKEN."
BEAUTIFUL CHICK BEAUTIFUL EGG CHICKEN, BEAUTIFUL AND SO ON WAY BACK TO COME TO BEAUTIFUL OR THE FIRST BEAUTIFUL EGG..
AND THAT CHICKEN FIRST HAD YOU IN MIND WHEN CREATED!
SEE.. THE WAY CERBERUS LOOKS AT IT..

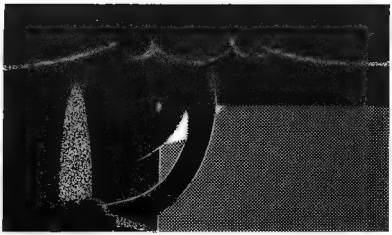
I THINK WE HAVE TO STOP TALKING ABOUT THIS NOW
TWITCH

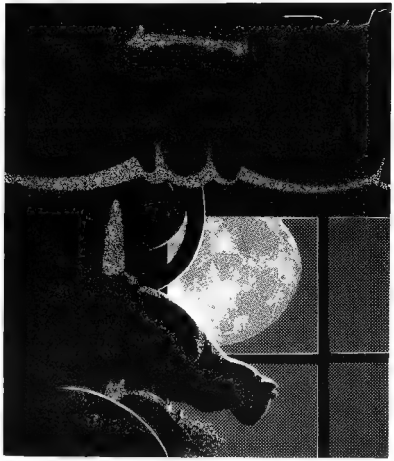

"CRAP, JST HELL! SHE'S A VIPER!
SHUT UP
A VIPER AND A SCORPION!
SHUT UP. SHE'S JAKA. CRAFTY BUG LOVES JAKA
SO?
SO SHUT UP
BUT SHE'S A...
SHUT UP
ALL IT WAS WAS THE RECEPTION... CERBERUS LET HER OUT OF HIS SIGHT AND SINCE JAKA IS
A VIPER!
EASILY MISLED
JAKA
EASILY MISLED
SHE TALKED TO SOMEONE SHE SHOULDN'T HAVE BUT I CERBERUS KEEPS AN EYE ON HER EVERY DAMN MINUTE OF HIS WAKING LIFE SO CERBERUS WAS ALREADY DOING WHEN JAKA GOT EASILY MISLED THEN NOTHING BAD CAN HAPPEN EVER, RIGHT? RIGHT! SO SHUT UP!!

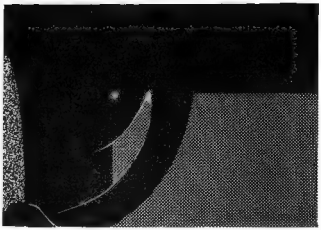

GUESS WE'LL GET SOME SLEEP
AYE
CRACK!
SPLASH!
BOING BOING BOING
HUMP HUMP HUMP

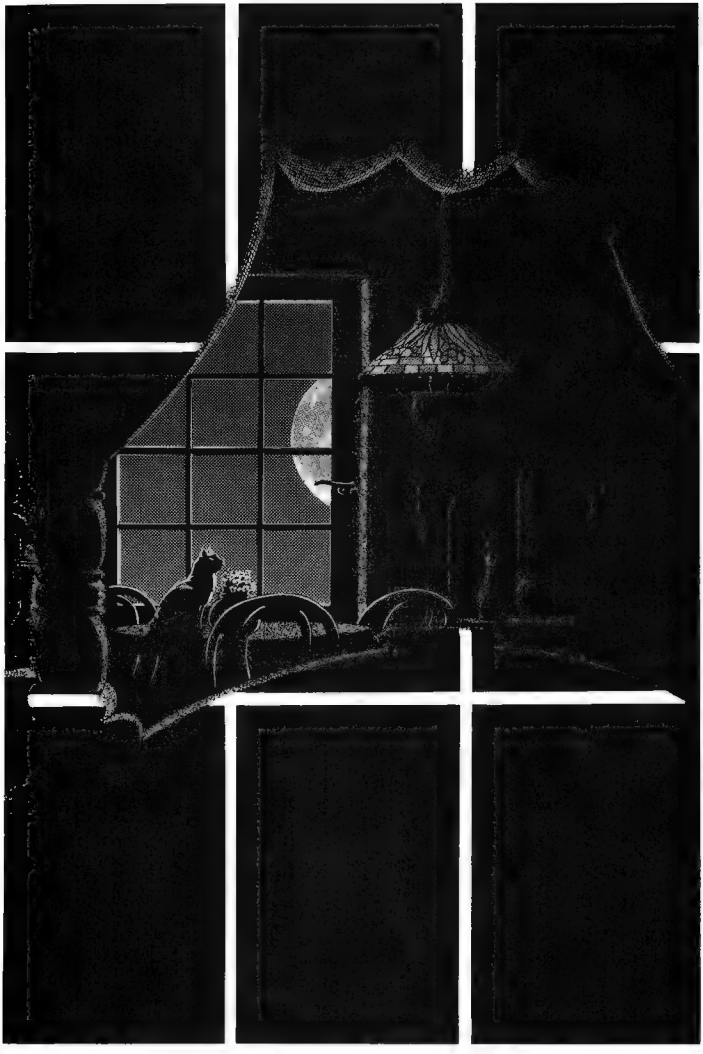
AYE
I SAID" WE'RE LEAVING FOR THE CLOTHING HUT"
"ARE YOU COMING?"
OR DO YOU WANT US TO COME BACK FOR YOU.
NAY! WAIT FOR CEREBUS! CEREBUS WILL BE RIGHT DOWN!
PLATEAU ROAD
DISTRICT ELEVEN
MORESH RO
DISTRICT TWELVE
SO CEREBUS STARTS PLAYING WITH THIS SPRING-LOADED CLAMP, SEE?
AND IT'S GOT TWO SHORT SHARP STAPLES INSIDE IT."
(DAD USED IT TO HOLD REALLY SMALL PIECES OF WOOD)
SO! CEREBUS STICKS HIS THUMB INSIDE THE CLAMP
AND SQUEEZES IT BLOODILY AND CHARREFULLY
BUT NOT CAREFULLY ENOUGH
BECAUSE ONE OF THE STAPLES GOES RIGHT INTO CEREBUS' THUMB.
HA HA HA
OH YOU'LL POOR BABY!
AND CEREBUS GOES


AND CEREBUS LOOKS OVER
AND DAD HAD BEEN WATCHING THE WHOLE TIME
AND DAD SAYS HM
DAD SAYS "YOU STAPLED YOUR THUMB"
AND CEREBUS DAD JUST SMILES AND TURNS BACK TO WHATEVER HE HAD BEEN WORKING ON
"POOR CEREBUS"? NAY NAY - IT WAS JUST FUNNY - THAT CEREBUS WOULD BE THAT
WAIT?
YOU MEAN HE DIDN'T EVEN LOOK AT IT? SO CLEAN?
NAY WHY WOULD HE? CEREBUS JUST PUNCHED A STUPID HOLE IN HIS STUPID THUMB
BUT IT COULD HAVE GOTTEN INFECTED
NAY IT WAS JUST A STUPID HOLE - TWO DROPS OF BLOOD AT MOST
TWO DROPS OF...
I'M BLEEDING
I'M NOT BLEEDING
YOU THERE? AUNT - UH - I-I'M BLEEDING
I'M ALL OUT OF BLOOD DROPS
THIS IS NOT BLEEDING
EW... WHAT IS THAT GOOP
PFFT... IS WHAT THIS?
WELL, AUNT LIZ'LL FIX IT
ABOUT THE BLEEDING
EUREKA SUCKED
YOU SUCKED A KILN BURNING THUMB AFTER YOU PUNCTURED IT WITH A KNIFE
WELL THAT
P. FFERENCE ANYWAY
IT WAS STILL
CEREBUS REALIZES THAT'S ALL YOU WERE
THEN WHY ARE YOU GETTING SO









AARDVARK COMMENT

Dear Dave,

I was going to write with a long, reasoned analysis of "Mama's Boy," but, to be honest, I just out and out agree with it. Oh, there's the odd quibble at your hyperbole ("Men's opinions won't be listened to for at least another century"? Well, there's a G7 meeting coming up soon, so I guess we'll just let the girls get on with it, huh?) *(Can't resist jumping in here, Michael. All of the G7 leaders have wives. I'm sure the "girls" are, indeed "getting on with it" in their preferred environment — behind closed marital doors where there is no public accountability.),* but in the main it was all pretty heartening stuff.

There shouldn't be too much surprise that picking teams works out OK for the game. Remember that other childhood decision-maker, "you cut and I'll choose"? That was used in the SALT talks to reduce nuclear weapons. Each side got to cut their nuclear goodies into 50 parcels of, in their judgement, equal worth (read "equal potential for turning the world to a cinder"), then they got to take turns choosing from the other guy's pile. I like that.

Discipline. Having your place. Sucking it up and getting on with the job. Unfashionable sentiments, Dave, old lad, but words to live by. Masculinity as a concept is in danger just now, not surprisingly. Is greater physical strength an asset in today's job market? What about aggression? What about our biological imperative to spread our seed far and wide? Hmm…not really a lot of winners there…but while we're throwing out the bath water, let's hold on to the good stuff. Dedication to a cause higher than the family group. Risk-taking. Putting freedom above safety. Drinking until you puke. Listening to George Thorogood. Driving too fast in fog. And most of all, one mood, all the time.

So "Mama's Boy" wasn't a wasted exercise. Every now and again someone has to restate the obvious, and I suppose it was your turn. My favourite treatment of the case for Real Men was in *Real Men Don't Bond*, subtitled "How to be a real man in an age of whiners."

> "An affirmation and strength come from a bonding between men that's impossible to put into words," says Ed Monnold, the mild-mannered federal lawyer and founder of the Men's Council of Greater Washington, one of six such local groups saving men's deep inner pain through communal rituals of dancing, roaring, hugging, and weeping…"American men face a desperate situation and don't even know it." He pauses thoughtfully and adds, "There's a lot of hurtin' cowboys out there."
>
> — From an article on the men's movement in the *Washington Post*, by reporter Phil McCombs

> "This does not help our mission."
>
> Arnold Schwarzenegger, *Terminator 2*

See, now I've got a scanner, I don't have to retype the quote. Of course, you might not be able to read it anymore, but that's not my problem.

The front of the book is just staggeringly good at present. I missed 226-228, then caught up in one go, and I really enjoyed them. The binding scene worked well, as did Rick's conversion (in all the senses). I really want his weight loss plan though. *(Better shape-disguising clothes is all that was. I would assume that at the local clothing hut, Rick's new "aura," as it were, worked on one of the Cirinists, and she actually helped him find more flattering clothing for his date — as opposed to the unflattering outfit someone foisted on him for his "bonfire" date. Word up, fellas — if you're having trouble getting laid, get a buddy's wife or girlfriend to pick out an outfit for you with those specifications in mind.* You *won't like the way you look in it, but the odds are it will "work."*)

Have you attracted any flak for Cerebus' (the character, not the comic. Yes, I know he's not real. I promise) fear/hatred of gay men? Could be fun having him come to terms with his confused sexuality. I mean, on a hormonal level alone, being a hermaphrodite must have some consequences…What about the "woodie by the waterfall" sequence, huh, huh? Or is that one stone best left unlifted? *(Oh, hey, Michael It gets a LOT weirder than that in Book Three of* Going Home.*)*

So, thanks for the ride, stay out of trouble, and I'll drop you a line from Moscow.

Michael Mooney

P.S. Oh, I can't find anyone stocking the new "Third Quarter" print over here. If any retailer out there is doing it mail order, put me down for a signed one. The inscription, Dave, should read: "OK, OK, there's no 'e' in Whisky."

Actually, the "Laird McJoolie's Single Malt Whisky in a Drum" in Rick's Story *was going to have "Moony (sic) Label Company" lettered on one side — and then I thought, "Oh, that's just too 'in-jokey' for words, Dave." So I left it out. Before that I just kept putting an "e" in whisky to get a rise out of you. Of course, before that it was an honest mistake.*

* * * * * * * * *

If a letter arrives at Aardvark-Vanaheim, and "Aardvark Comments" isn't there to print it, does anybody read it? It would seem so, since the odd letter still occasionally pops up in *Cerebus*. And besides, the fact that I have something to say is not altered if no one is listening.

My own theory is that you're conducting another informal study of your own audience. For over a hundred issues, you printed letters with responses. Then you wondered, "What kind of letters would I get if I printed them without responses?" Once you found out, you wondered, "What kind of letters would I get if I printed responses again?" Now I suspect you're wondering, "What kind of letter would I get if I didn't print *any* of them?"

Well, here's one example.

Greetings from the Alamo City, Dave. (Have you ever been to San Antonio?) This is Mark Kusenberger writing, the guy who runs a computer network with the file server named after Cerebus. I used to put out a periodic office publication called *WordProven*, which ended up cancelled due to creative constriction, but not before I printed an interview you gave me. Maybe you noticed that Craig Miller even listed *WordProven Underground Special Edition* in the Dave Sim Checklist in *Cerebus Companion* #2. And due to the wonder of alphabetical order, my humble publication was listed right after Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*. I'm pleased as punch.

Our current colonel had some of his officers start up a bimonthly newsletter. I pounced at the chance to routinely sound off, and contribute a column called *Swamp Bytes*. (My work cubicle is called "the Swamp." A M*A*S*H* reference, as you may have guessed.) Several people have told me my column is the only thing worth reading in the newsletter; I was even told this about the latest issue — it's only text pieces being written by myself or the colonel!

The reason I'm writing is that I saw something in our local excuse for a newspaper, the *San Antonio Express-News*. It includes a daily column of factoids by a mysterious figure named L.M. Boyd. A couple of weeks ago, Boyd's column (included with this letter) closed with this simple comment: "The aardvark hunts alone."

I won't even pretend I can add to that. Could anything fit Cerebus, and everything about the character and the comic, more perfectly?

I do think that phrase would be a great code greeting between spies. ("The aardvark hunts alone." "But the elephant shaves its legs on Thursdays.") Yet how it applies to Cerebus, and you, speaks massive volumes far beyond that little joke.

A few days later, Boyd's column stated that "The aardvark's 20 rootless teeth grow continually all its life." If this is somehow relevant, you'll have to explain it to me. Many moons ago, you did ask for any facts you could get about aardvarks. I don't imagine you're still soliciting, but in any case, there it is.

Get back to work. *Cerebus* is still great. Thanks for the terrific work.

Sincerely,
Mark Kusenberger
3402 Ridge Ash
San Antonio, TX 78247-4505

"The aardvark hunts alone." "The elephant shaves its legs on Thursdays." You realize, of course, Mark, that we've now blown Michael Mooney's cover for his Moscow trip.

It is a very strange effect: the letters that I print generate letters of a like kind. Like the one issue years back where, coincidentally, each letter mentioned a series of band names. Word got around that that was the secret to getting a letter printed, and for about a year every letter that came in mentioned band names.

❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄ ❄

Dear Dave,

Hi there. I'm a fan.

For me, and the people whose opinion I respect, you and your work are in the top five of a very short list of American comics that are worth reading.

No, really, I'm serious. Even if you occasionally write something that sucks really hard (like *Reads*. Boy did that ever suck!), you at least have the decency to make it entertaining. Yep, I really like *Cerebus*. Thanks for being one of the few remaining comic-book creators who gives a shit about the quality of his work.

Now here's the reason I wrote: Recently I've been paying more attention than usual to the stuff in the back pages of *Cerebus*: *Bob the Angry Flower*, your TV-essay, your conversation with Alan Moore (Great stuff! You guys should do that again.), etc. ... Anyway, when you started announcing your "Mama's Boy" essay, I figured we were in for another thought-provoking, thoroughly enjoyable little diatribe. Well, I've just read parts one and two, and it provoked something, all right. It set off my bullshit alarm almost right away. There was something in there that didn't make sense, something that didn't ring true, and it was so bloody obvious I'm afraid to even say it.

Don't get me wrong; I agree unconditionally with most of what you wrote. Your description of the Mama's Boy syndrome is 100% accurate, and I have no doubt that there are people who never grow out of it. But there's something else that you seem to be suggesting that I just don't get.

You seem to be saying (I may have misread this, so don't bother to read on if I have) that fucking up your kid by trying too hard to do what you think is the right thing is a mistake mostly made by mothers. That, Dave, with all due respect, is bullshit.

Here's why: Mommy's little Prince has a counterpart. Yes, the Anti-Mama's Boy lives! He's called Daddy's Little Soldier (DLS for short), and he's one mean, lean, little butt-kicking son of a bitch.

Here's an example: For the last few years, I've been coaching a junior soccer team. Thirteen eight-to-ten-year-old boys engaging in tough, healthy competition. No Mama's Boys here (they've been "sorted out" long ago). Nobody cries when they get tackled. Nobody expects them to. So it's good, clean fun all round, right? Well, no. Not really.

Every year we have the same fucking problem. There's always one, you see. Always one DLS. I've met enough of them by now to recognise them on sight. They're either painfully quiet or painfully loud, but

they're always excruciatingly nervous. The kid himself isn't really the problem. Not at first. It's his dad who starts to fuck things up from the start. Every match we play, every practice session, he's there, standing at the sidelines, shouting nonstop encouragement and abuse. And when I say nonstop, I mean nonstop. When I say encouragement, I mean he's shouting at his kid to kick the shit out of anyone who comes near him (including the referee). When I say abuse, I mean the kind of abuse that would make a drill sergeant blush. During half time, daddy picks fights with the other parents, the coach and anybody who's stupid enough to make eye contact.

So, what's daddy's problem, anyway? No problem, really. He just wants junior to do well, doesn't he? Wants to teach him there's nothing wrong with pushing your limits. Wants to make sure his son doesn't sell himself short. In plain English, daddy's mortally afraid that junior is going to get "sorted out," and, of course, he's the only one who can keep this from happening, so that's what he's gonna do. (Oh, and by the way, if the sissy coach has a problem with that, he can expect to get his tires slashed on a regular basis.)

Now, guess what happens after a few months of this.

Up until now, I've witnessed only the following two possible scenarios:

1. DLS takes his daddy's advice. "Fuck teamwork," he says. "Fuck the coach and fuck my sissy teammates. I'm doing my own thing. I rule, and everybody else sucks." Everybody starts hating his guts, and the team falls apart. No regional championship this season. Thanks a heap, dad.
2. DLS tries to ignore his dad, tries to be a good team player, but his daddy's constant taunting starts to affect his play. The team loses a few games. Dad starts shouting even louder until DLS finally cracks and quits the team. ("What? You quit? You no-good-worse-than-dead-girly-boy! You're no son of mine!") Again, thanks a heap, dad.

I could go into detail here, about the way some of these "dads" treated their kids, but I won't bother if only because you probably wouldn't believe it anyway.

Hopefully you can see what I'm trying to say here. The way I see it, both Daddy's Little Soldier and Mommy's Little Prince have the same problem: Loyalty to a parent who has no idea what the fuck he/she is doing. No mysterious *female* thingie is causing this. It's nothing but an unhappy combination of fear and stupidity. There's nothing rare about it either. Most parents make these mistakes one way or another. And most of the time there are no serious consequences. Either the parents figure out they're doing something stupid and stop doing it, or the kids finally realize that they're going to have to raise themselves.

All that seems perfectly straightforward to me. You know what I think must have happened? I probably completely misread those two chapters. Maybe it's me who isn't making any sense.

Then again, you are older and wiser than me, so maybe there really is some fiendishly female thingie going around, subconsciously influencing mothers all over the world to cut their sons balls off.

Hell, weirder things have happened.

Sincerely,
Bruno Katt

P.S. I also don't get that "feminization of society" thing. But that's probably because my girlfriend's female void has been sucking up my male light while I wasn't looking, right? ("Dammit, Jacky! Get your tongue outta my ear!")

Well, hey, I wouldn't rule it out.

On the soccer/football-in-the-European sense, I will definitely concede the point — since it is the only sport, so far as I know, that specifically generates (and no question in my mind that the effect has *to be testosterone-related) hooliganism, it seems to me that it is something implicit in the game and/or venue (European and Latin American countries — with the United Kingdom being by far the worst offender). We don't do that in North America as a rule, so I don't know what to suggest by way of analysis and/or remedy. I would agree that something is definitely wrong there that should be corrected. Good luck.*

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Dear Dave,

Excerpts

I felt numb.

Interesting, how we use the same verb to describe sensation —I felt warm — as we use to describe emotion — I felt numb.

Hidden in our language are truths about ourselves. In this case, Pete, the hidden truth is that the neural circuits that process sensation are the same neural circuits that create emotion. The difference between sensation and emotion is that information flows the other way. Emotion is nothing more than sensation in reverse. You know you are afraid because your heart is pounding, your palms are sweaty, and your mouth is dry.

The word itself e-motion means "flowing out." Emotion is simply sensation we create.

During my first year in college I took a class called Foundations of Mathematics, and I learned that building a machine to generate truly random numbers is impossible. I know that you earn your living fixing broken machinery, and you probably feel that the universe is not only random, it is perversely so. But serious mathematicians all know that there is no mathematical trick, no equation, capable of producing a truly random series of numbers. Although Evelyn and I hadn't known it, the Motorola Monkey had been stillborn.

The universe isn't a big machine built cunningly by the Cosmic Watchmaker, nor is it a roulette wheel where the atoms rattle around like white balls, settling our fate by chance alone.

No. The Universe is something else, something in between, something weird, something completely numerical that remains quite unpredictable.

Reason. The most elegant function of the human brain.

When we reason, we are using the same circuits in our brains that we use to process sensation and emotion, because those are the only circuits we have inside our heads. At the neural level, there is no difference between thinking and feeling.

We only like to think there is because thinking makes us feel good.

Inside our mammalian brains, which are the only ones we'll ever have, incoming sensation, outgoing emotion, and internal activity we call thought are jumbled joyously.

The above excerpts are taken from Jim Cowan's short science fiction story, "The Spade of Reason." If you are interested in reading the entire piece, the easiest place to find it should be in *The Year's Best Science Fiction* Fourteenth Annual Collection 1997, edited by Gardner Dozois. I wish that I had the time to go back and reread all of your comments on reason vs. emotion and construct a well-thought-out analysis of your position in light of the above points, but I don't. Busy working. Maybe you can just comment on them yourself or print them for the readership to comment on for me. To me they smack of *truth* and have a place in the ongoing discussion in *Cerebus*. Maybe I will find time and write back later on the subject. Enjoying *Rick's Story*. I hope that when it is over, we can leave the bar setting. I think I'm starting to get "tavern fever."

Sincerely,
Reed W. Tate
5241 Blacktail Road
Careywood, ID 83809

"Thinking makes us feel good"? I suppose it depends on what kind of thinking you're (or Jim Cowan is) talking about. Very, very little of my serious thinking makes me feel good, but, then, I don't really expect it to. Serious thinking makes me serious, intent, focused. I think being serious, intent, and focused ("Serious, Intent, and Focused. I'm sorry Mr. Serious isn't in right now — would you like to speak to Mr. Intent? Thank you. Please hold." Obviously no serious thought going on when I'm answering letters.) is good, beneficial as opposed to making me feel good. I'm very seldom engaged in doing something good and/or beneficial when I feel good.

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Dear Dave,

I think God is an asshole. You read the Old Testament: He's a mad bitch intent on destruction of any city/culture/peoples that don't explicitly follow Him and Him only, with all His arbitrary rules (as set forth in books like Leviticus) to the T. A bit tyrannical, no? He'd send the Jews in to attack the Philistines, or whoever it was that week, and they were instructed not just to waste the soldiers, but He told them to waste every able-bodied man, and not just all the able-bodied men in that town, but all able-bodied men, feeble-bodied men, old broken-down men, and not just the men, but they were to waste all the women and children too, and not just all men, women, and children, but all the men, women, and children, and farm animals, and dogs in the entire town. A self-described "jealous god," the bitch instituted a tradition of theology-justified genocide that still reigns fresh in the "holy land," and sent forth spiritual echoes that touched down in places like Torquemada's Spain or Nazi Germany, where the karmic balance was paid back, I suppose, on the Jews, unwitting pawns of the jealous asshole god. I mean, Dave, how can you admire a guy like that?

Anyway, love yer book, man. I was the guy at the Houston book-signing a few years ago at that hotel (150th-issue celebration or something) that you and Colleen drew a Cerebus-mooning-over-a-dancing-girl picture for, who said you should get someone in a big Cerebus suit for such affairs to wander around with a sword and forcibly convert all the unwashed heathens who don't know better to read *Cerebus* and like it and admit it rules. Sadly, my wise and just council fell on deaf ears, my liege. You said it wasn't a good idea. But, hey, it was just a joke, Dave — lighten up, all right? I've got a better sense of humor than that other asshole.

Anyhow, yours, etc.,
E-rok
157 State St. #8
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

P.S. Synchronistically, the comic I read after writing this letter was *Doom Patrol* #24, Grant Morrison's Red Jack, "I should really introduce myself... God. Pleased to meet you." Bringing the God/Jack the Ripper connection full circle, eh? Sadistic fuck...

P.P.S. And immediately after writing the P.S., I read the letter I had skipped from *Cerebus* 224, Robert H.D. Ahrens' cool letter with its multitudinous references to synchronicity and Grant Morrison murder stories...and so the noose tightens...

Welll... uhhh... hm.

Obviously, I think you're misreading Scripture. I'd give a more elaborate answer, but I don't want to give away any of the surprises I have in store for the rest of the series. One thought: God allowed you to write this letter and allowed me to print it. I think that's pretty broad-minded of Him, don't you?

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Dear Dave,

Just a quick note to say thanks for *Guys*, and thanks for all of *Cerebus* so far. It's an ongoing fantastic piece of work, and you can be very proud of a great achievement. I thought that *Guys* was building up to an incredible, heart-breaking ending with the inevitable "Fred"-Joanne split, but you surprised me in the way it actually finished. It's a story line that you could have wrought a lot of melodrama from, yet the humour in theending worked well. Rick's reappearance was a big surprise too.

Cerebus has become, since *Mothers and Daughters* ended in #200, to me, even a more vivid and affecting portrait of "a life." The knowledge that Cerebus gained on Juno and his (somewhat) enhanced maturity in spite of (or because of?) his "mental illness"/enhanced thought process post-Bear era have brought a great richness to your work. I think (and feel) that it's going to be one hell

of an affecting roller-coaster ride from here to #300 — can't wait to experience it all.

Thanks again, Dave. I wish you lots of happiness in the years to come.

Yours sincerely,
David Young,
(the Geologist who met you at Ozcon, Melbourne '96, and left some scodge [small buggid] for you)
c/o Dept. of Mines & Energy
P.O. Box 2901
Darwin, NT 0801
Australia

P.S. Would be nice to see Lord Julius again soon!

I could say that I put Lord J — or a reasonable facsimile — in issue 233 just for you, David. But then you'd know I was lying. Belated thanks for the single malt whiskey. Very tasty. Pardon? Oh, never mind, that sound is just Michael Mooney's molars grinding. It was rather loud though, wasn't it?

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Hey, Dave,

Let me come straight to the point. This is in regard to E. Templeton's letter and your reply published in #223. I'm not one of your regular pen pals (second letter in six years), but your reply to E. made a point that inspired me to write.

The comment I'd like to make concerns our present "emotion-based society." If we agree that this is where we're at, then I'd argue that it was inevitable, it's going to get worse, and a primary cause is information overload.

Hang with me here a sec. In a thoroughly commercialized world of movies, email, radio, the Web, multimedia presentations, and television, television, television, people are continually bombarded with more information than they can comfortably absorb. What happens to all the little details? Well, if you're not lucky enough to have been born to a life of leisure or aren't terminally self-actualized, after a while the details start to fade.

Remember what CNN said Saddam Hussein did yesterday? Me neither. But after the details have faded, I *am* left with a kind of vague impression. A sort of feeling, if you will. A — dare I say it — emotion.

Okay, so maybe *you* had a second cousin, three times removed, who has a friend who knew some guy who stubbed his toe in Operation Desert Storm. So now you subscribe to the alt.paranoia.black helicopter. rubber undergarment.Saddam Hussein newsgroup and can rattle off to the minute the times of all Saddam's bowel movements in the last 24 hours — backwards.

But do you remember the details of the U.S. tax reform bill? Latest developments in AIDS research? How about what those pesky separationists are up to in Quebec? (Sorry. That's the only Canadian issue I could come up with.) Chances are you don't because you've still got X pages of *Cerebus* to complete before the deadline for the next issue hits. But I bet you have a few *feelings* on the matter. And so it goes for us all.

Well, that's my piece. Thanks for listening. Questions? Comments? Smart-ass remarks?

Greg Zarcone
5429 F Briardale Lane
Columbus, OH 43016

A couple of comments, I guess: they're called "separatists," not "separationists." I say that only because it reinforces your point. I correct you on that small point, and I look like some great authority on the subject. I'm not one of those Canadians who bemoans American ignorance of most things Canadian. By way of example, it makes Canadians really irritable when American or British or whatever musicians say, "It's really great to be here in Toronto, Canada." You can practically see the thought balloons over the crowd: "Toronto, ONTARIO" or "Toronto, ONTARIO, Canada." I mean, you don't hear them say, "It's great to be here in Columbus, United States." However, if a Canadian band goes to Australia, I'd bet dollars to donuts (soon to be of equivalent value in Canada and Australia) that they say, "It's great to be here in Sydney, Australia." I'm also willing to bet that you can see the thought balloons over the crowd: "Sydney, NEW SOUTH WALES," or "Sydney, NEW SOUTH WALES, Australia." Getting past that, I think, is just part of the pecking order, "knowing your place." Canada and Australia are not in the "first rank" of countries. And it should be enough for Canadians and Australians to be interested in and knowledgeable about all things Canadian and Australian respectively without expecting ANYone else in the world to give a rat's ass one way or the other.

I think it is worthwhile to stay well informed, but it is also worthwhile to know how little it is possible for any of us to know very much at all and to accept that we are ALL inherently pretty ignorant as a result.

I for one would prefer that I had saved a certain percentage of my memory storage for Bible verses, Shakespeare soliloquies, and Dostoyevsky passages, as an example, rather than 80,000 pop-music lyrics and television-theme songs, origins and first appearances of superheroes, names and years of Hollywood films, etc., etc., etc., ad nauseam. Oh, well. Too late now.

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Okay, I told you nice folks that I would do an Elrod bunny or a Cerebus tree post-it-note sketch for the first ten people who sent Jeff Seiler a Mick or Keef sketch. Well, I just got a letter from the Jeffmeister which included photocopies of 18 responses he had received by 29 September (including someone in Irving Park, Illinois who wants his bunny donated to charity. Nyuk, nyuk). So, I just thought I'd let you know — if you sent your sketches to Jeff before 29 September, you will *get your autographed tree or bunny sketch. No, no. Please. I'm more than happy to do it. You know that. And Jeff gets his Mick or Keef sketch as well. Don't you just love a happy ending?*